

Jesse Knight Not Always Rich, Powerful; Story of Youth One of Poverty, Struggle

5 Jan. 1966

By

KATHRYN D. GROESBECK

Doubtless there are few in Utah who have not heard of Provo's Jesse Knight, his fabulous wealth, the tremendous part he played in mining and in building industries where men could find employment, and in helping to finance educational edifices that would benefit his state. Most accept his days of opulence as always having been, not pausing to look back in time upon the man as a youth, a boy ever upward reaching for a better life for all.

Looking back one may see a lad of five years, whose life was colored by a westward journey over a frontier trail, by covered wagons and a devoted pioneer mother, by Indians of the plains and mountains, by forests from which he hauled wood, and by many other things that made the western scene of his youth, including stories told him by his mother and the contact he made with people in the new land with him.

Born In Nauvoo

Jesse Knight, with a definite pioneer background, was born in Nauvoo, Ill., in 1845. As did most of the boys he knew, he too, went barefoot, always dressed in homespun or made-over clothes. In Utah he herded cows, gathered sego roots and pigweed to supplement the meager food supply of his family, gleaned for potatoes, and aided in winter wood gathering. His was no easy way of life.

When he had earned enough money, he made his first big purchase, a colt that he valued highly, only to trade it soon afterwards for a cow for his mother, who would make from the milk butter and cheese for her family. That seemed a far better thing to do than satisfy his own desire to own a horse. Pleasing her brought his pleasure for it was she who taught him, even while she labored at her work.

Did Man's Work

While still a boy in his teens, Jesse did a man's work at logging. When his employer noticed his serious attitude and his efforts really to accomplish something, he showed great appreciation. He encouraged the boy and promised and gave



YOUNG JESSE — Most photos of Utah's legendary Jesse Knight show him in portly maturity. This rare old picture was taken in his youth.

additional pay to him. Jesse never forgot and in his later life paid well the ones that did their best at their jobs with him.

Though Jesse was cautious, he did not hesitate when the opportunity came, to make hazardous trips into Nevada and Montana to sell produce at a time when vigilantes were active and lynchings common. He more than once saw men dangling from trees where they had been strung up. One time, in Montana, he took his pay in gold dust for some produce, hiding the gold in the hub of an old wagon wheel that he carried on the back of his wagon. No highwayman, he reasoned, would think to look there for anything if he stopped Jesse and his wagon. Luckily Jesse was not waylaid.

Retraces Pioneer Route

Possibly it was the fascination of adventure along with his deep desire to help others that took him at 17 years of age back over the pioneer route he traveled at five years of age with his widowed mother and her family. His journey with others at this later time was to assist converts from Europe in Nebraska to Utah. Six companies of Saints, 50 in each company, took four months on the job of carrying food, driving cattle and horses harnessed to wagons, hauling clothing and

blankets to those poor people suffering and dying by the dozens on the plains, and helping the survivors reach Utah.

One summer Jesse volunteered to aid in guarding new settlements in Sanpete from Indian attack during what was known as the Walker War. There was no end to his efforts to help others.

Begins Ranching

Eventually, with what earnings he had, he began ranching soon after his marriage, on a place purchased about two miles west of Payson, stocking the ranch with dairy cattle, horses and equipment. As his family increased, all found plenty of work there doing the ranch chores. Butter and cheese were always made. Regardless of all the work involved, there was time for learning new things along other lines and time for entertainment.

After the children came and the life of one of them was spared following a critical illness, Jesse Knight was so thankful for this blessing that he felt he could never do too much for his church or for humanity. He promised himself ever to serve all to the best of his ability to the end of his days.

Jesse Knight kept faith with himself. And when wealth poured into his coffers from the many mining interests he located on Godiva Mountain in the Tintic area, where his miners built the town of Knightsville, Jesse Knight made good his promise.

SOUND SLABS PATENTED

Acoustical concrete slabs, finely pitted on one side to absorb sound, are being widely used in schools, office buildings and shopping centers. A patent for the process was recently granted to Clairborne H. Kinard of Franklin, Tenn.

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